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Letter dated 20 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

I am hereby forwarding you the press release of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva on the commemoration of the twenty-sixth anniversary of Black January in Azerbaijan (see annex).

I would be highly appreciative if you could kindly circulate the present letter and the annex thereto* as a document of the thirty-first session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 4.

(*Signed*) Emil Hasanov

Counsellor, Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* Circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

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Annex to the letter dated 20 January 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

[English only]

Commemoration of the 26th anniversary of Black January

Today is a Day of National Mourning in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Thousands of people are visiting Alley of Martyrs to commemorate the heroism of courageous sons and daughters of the Azerbaijani people perished on 20 January 1990 for the sake of freedom and independence.

20 January 1990 is a day, which went down in history of the struggle for the freedom and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, as a heroism page. Deploying the military divisions of the Soviet army against wide mass who got out in the streets and squares of Baku for the independence of the country, had brought to the unprecedented tragedy in Azerbaijan. On that tragic night patriotic sons and daughters, for whom the country's freedom, honor and dignity was above anything else, sacrificed their own lives and became martyrs. Tragedy of January 20 brought to huge losses and deaths of innocent people, who could not stand the treacherous policy of the criminal Soviet authorities towards Azerbaijan. This tragedy demonstrated the struggle spirit, unbending character and pride of the Azerbaijani nation, who intended to the freedom and independence.

Soviet authorities tried to conceal the scale of this tragic crime from its own people and the international community. However, the grave consequences of this operation were so obvious. As a result of the bloodshed in Baku 131 innocent civilians were killed, 611 people wounded, hundreds of people arrested. State of emergency was proclaimed in the capital of Azerbaijan which lasted more than a year.

The massacre perpetrated by the Soviet military machine in Azerbaijan was an act of unseen aggression and execution of citizens by its own state. It represented a flagrant breach of the Constitutions of the former USSR and Azerbaijan SSR. By sending troops to crush the civilian population on that day, the USSR government flouted the international law, including UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of which it had been a party.

This despicable act could not prevent the intention of Azerbaijani people to be independence from the Soviet Union. As a result of brave struggle the Azerbaijani people restored its independence and Azerbaijan became a sovereign State.

Today, Azerbaijani people by visiting and lying flowers on the graves of heroes are paying once again tribute to the victims of the 20th January tragedy. The life and struggle of the martyrs are the source of pride of today's and next generations. Thanks to their heroism, today, there is an independent Azerbaijani statehood among world nations. The sacred task of all Azerbaijanis is to defend and further strengthen the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan gained at the expense of great sacrifices.